The Reason Why Many Cannot Find Peace

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"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee fromyou. Drawnear to God, and He will drawnear to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." James 4:7-10.

WE frequently meet with persons who tell us that they cannot find peace with God. They have been bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus, but they misunderstand the command and, while they think they are obeying it, they are really unbelievers and, therefore, they miss the way of peace. They attempt to pray, but their petitions are not answered and their supplications yield them no comfort whatever, for neither their faith nor their prayer is accepted of the Lord. Such persons are described by James in the 3rd verse of the chapter now open before us—"You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss." We cannot be content to see seekers in this wretchedness and, therefore, we endeavor to comfort them, instructing them, again and again, in the great Gospel precept, "Believe and live."

Yet as a rule they get no further, but linger in an unsatisfactory condition. They assure us that they believe in Jesus, but we see none of the fruits of faith in them, neither can they, themselves, say that they derive any spiritual benefit from the faith which they profess. Now I fear that comfort is misplaced in these cases. When we have endeavored to cheer such people, I fear we may have been filming over a wound which needs a sharp knife rather than a soft bandage—a keen lancet rather than a healing liniment.

We shall try at this time to show certain uneasy souls why they do not obtain peace and what they must be brought to by the Holy Spirit before they can rightly claim that they are saved. Though our words may be somewhat caustic, they will be uttered in loving faithfulness and may the Lord our God make them effectual to the ending of the inner strife and the establishment of settled peace. I fear that many who profess to be Christians are in a very questionable condition— they have no joy of their faith and no success in their prayers. Whether they are Christians or not is a moot point and the practical James does not waste time in discussing the doubtful question, but speaks to them from both sides of their apparent condition.

In his previous chapters he calls them, "my brethren," and even, "my beloved brethren." He draws no line of demarcation when he, afterwards, addresses them as, "sinners," whose hands must be cleansed and, as, "double-minded" persons, whose hearts must be purified.

They were both of these—they were professedly Brothers and Sisters, but they were at heart unchaste to Christ—they indulged in grievous sins of contention and malice—and their hearts were divided between the love of sin and the hope of salvation. We will not, therefore, raise personal questions, or try to discriminate where certainty is hard to reach, but we will speak to suspicious characters without determining whether they are truly Believers or not.

If such persons claim to be called Brothers and Sisters, we will address them as such, but it will be in a sentence like this, "My Brothers and Sisters, such things ought not to be." On the other hand, we will use no condemnatory title, but leave the question between God and each man's own conscience. We will go to the root of the matter and set forth the reason for the lack of peace and salvation of which some complain. May the sacred Spirit help us to point out the fatal failure which keeps the soul from rest. If any man is not sure that he is in Christ, he ought not to be easy one moment more until he is so.

Dear Friend, without the fullest confidence as to your saved condition, you have no right to be at ease and I pray you may never be so! This is a matter too important to be left undecided. Instantly should every man of prudence make

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assurance doubly sure and bind all things fast that he may find them fast for eternity—for eternity I say—for thus says the Lord. Never risk your souls, for your souls are yourselves, your real selves and nothing can make up for their loss. If you lose your souls, it will be no recompense to have gained the whole world! Be careful, then! Leave nothing insecure. Carefully measure and weigh every important step. Consider and examine, lest being so near to the kingdom, any of you should seem to come short of it.

To help you to a settled peace, let me, first of all, urge upon you to obey the comprehensive command of our text— "Submit yourselves therefore to God." And then, secondly, let me further press upon you to practice the other precepts which follow, such as, "Resist the devil." "Draw near to God." "Cleanse your hands." "Purify your hearts." "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep." And, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord."

First listen to THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMAND—"Submit yourselves therefore to God." According to the connection, the lighting spirit within many men shows that they have not submitted themselves to God—lusting, envy, strife, contention, jealousy, anger—all these things declare that the heart is not submissive but remains violently self-willed and rebellious. Those who are still wrathful, proud, contentious and selfish are evidently unsubdued. There are some men to whom the very idea of submission is distasteful—they will be subjective to no one, but wish to be their own gods and a law unto themselves. "Submit" is a galling word to them. They say in their hearts, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

They are willing, enough, to accept His favors, willing enough, after their fashion, to say, "Thank God," but as to submission, they will have none of it—it suits not their high

mightiness! They strive for the mastery. They push for the front place, aiming to advance their own interests and make the great I to be lord above all. The Apostle quietly indicates in the words of our text that many Christian professors need to submit, for at present their unhumbled nature leads them to lusting and striving—and effectually prevents their asking so as to receive at the Lord's hands. A lack of submission is no new or rare fault in mankind. Ever since the Fall it has been the root of all sin. When the heart submits to God in sincerity, the work of Grace is begun. And when it submits perfectly, the work is complete. But for this, Divine Grace must display its power, for the heart is obstinate and rebellious.

From the moment when our mother Eve stretched out her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit and her husband joined her in setting up the human will against the Divine, the sons of men have universally been guilty of a lack of conformity to the will of God. They choose their own way and will not submit their wills. They think their own thoughts and will not submit their understanding. They love earthly things and will not submit their affections. Man wants to be his own law and his own master. This is abominable, since we are not our own makers, for, "it is He that has made us and not we ourselves."

The Lord should have supremacy over us, for our existence depends on His will. I have heard much of the rights of man, but it were well also to consider the rights of God, which are the first, highest, surest and most solemn rights in the universe and lie at the base of all other rights! The Lord has an absolute right to the beings whom He has fashioned and it is shameful that the great mass of men seem never even to remember that He exists, much less to ask themselves what is due to Him. Alas, great God, how are You a stranger even in the world which You have, Yourself, made! Your creatures, who could not see if You had not given them eyes, look everywhere except to You. Creatures who could not think if You had not given them minds, think of all things except You! And beings who could not live if You did not keep them in being, forget You utterly, or, if they remember Your existence and see Your power, are foolhardy enough to become Your foes!

The hemlock of sin grows in the furrows of opposition to God. When the Lord is pleased to turn the hearts of opposers to the obedience of His Truth, it is an evident token of salvation. In fact, it is the dawn of salvation itself! To submit to God is to find rest! The rule of God is so beneficial that He ought readily to be obeyed. He never commands us to do that which, in the long run, can be injurious to us, nor does He forbid us anything which can be to our real advantage. Our God is so kind, so wise, so full of loving forethought, that it is always be to our best interest to follow His lead. Even if we could be left to choose our own way and were under no bonds of duty, it would be wise and prudent to choose the way of the Lord, for it is the path of pleasantness and safety.

Beloved, the Lord is far too great to have any need to deal unjustly, or unkindly with His creatures. Indeed, He is so great that He cannot desire any personal advantage from His government, but He condescends to govern us because

without His rule and guidance we would be utterly undone. It is for our good that like a father in a family He commands us this or forbids us the other. It is wanton cruelty to ourselves when we break away from the liberty with which Jesus makes us free, to place ourselves under the tyranny of selfishness and the baser passions of the mind. It is madness to forsake the honorable service of the great King to become the slave of Satan. O that men would submit themselves unto God and be willing to be blessed!

All resistance against God is, from the necessity of the case, be futile. Common sense teaches that rebellion against Omnipotence is both insanity and blasphemy. The Lord's purpose must stand and His pleasure must be done! His power will assuredly crush all opposition and it is idle to raise it. Why, then, should a man contend against his Master? Wisdom as well as righteousness call upon him to submit to God. And then let it always be known that submission to God is absolutely necessary to salvation. A man is not saved until he bows before the supreme majesty of God. He may say, "I believe in Jesus," but if he goes on to follow out his own desires and to gratify his own passions, he is a mere pretender, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Dead faith will save no man! It is not even as good as the faith of devils, for they "believe and tremble," and these men believe in a fashion which makes them brazen in their iniquity. No, salvation means being saved from the domination of self and sin! Salvation means being made to long after likeness to God, being helped by Divine Grace to reach to that likeness and living after the mind and will of the Most High. Submission to God is the salvation which we preach, not a mere deliverance from eternal burning, but deliverance from present rebellion, deliverance from the sin which is the fuel of those unquenchable flames. There must be conformity to the eternal Laws of the universe and according to these God must be first and man must bow to Him—nothing can be right till this is done. Submit is a command which in every case must be obeyed—or no peace or salvation will be found.

Now, it is generally, in this matter of submission, that the stumbling block lies in the way of souls when seeking peace with God. It keeps them unsaved and, as I have already said, necessarily so, because a man who is not submissive to God is not saved. He is not saved from rebellion. He is not saved from pride. He is still evidently an unsaved man, no matter what he may think of himself. Perhaps by a few personal remarks I may hit upon the reason why certain of my hearers cannot get the peace which the Gospel so freely sets before them. There is a lack of submission in some point or other. In the saved man there is and must be a full and unconditional submission to the Law of God. He must consent unto the Law that it is good.

If your mind has up to now quibbled against the Law, you must end the fight, for it is impossible that you should be right while you quarrel with the Law of Righteousness! If you set yourself up to be a judge of the Law, you judge the Lawgiver Himself, and what is this but the blackest presumption? Traced to its real meaning, the thought of judging the Law

is treason and would dethrone God and reign in His place! How sad to see a sinful mortal criticizing the perfect Law of his Maker! Dare you do this? If you say in your heart, "He is too strict in marking sin and too severe in punishing it," what is this but condemning your Judge? If you say, "He calls me to account for idle words and even for sins of ignorance and this is hard," what is this but to call your Lord unjust?

Should the Law be amended to suit your desires? Should its requirements be accommodated to ease your indolence? If you ask for this you are not saved, for a saved person delights in the Law of God after the inward man. He says of it, "the Law is holy," though he weeps as he adds, "but I am carnal, sold under sin." He honors the Law as he bows before it and confesses his shortcomings. Yes, and before a man can have peace with God he must submit himself to the sentence of the Law. Though that Law in its severity searches the thoughts and tries the heart, arraigns us before the bar of God and pronounces sentence upon us, we must acknowledge it to be just!

Grace working in the heart brings the penitent to plead guilty to the sin and to admit that the penalty is deserved. In my own case I unreservedly acknowledge that when the Law in my conscience condemned me to Hell, I dared not lift a finger nor even think a thought by way of disputing the sentence. The conscience is not Divinely quickened, nor the soul renewed, nor the man saved, unless he cries, "I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge."

You must submit yourselves to the righteousness and severity of God or He will resist you as He does all the proud. There can be no pardon for a man unless he will honor the Law by hearty submission. If your plea is, "not guilty," you

will be committed for trial according to justice—and then you cannot be forgiven by mercy! You are in a hopeless position! God Himself cannot meet you upon that ground, for He cannot admit that the Law is unrighteous and its penalty too severe. The Lord cannot be at peace with you while you defy His Law! He declares that you are guilty and you dispute this declaration, therefore between you and Himself there is a quarrel which never can be ended till you admit your error and beg for pardon.

He can deal with you in mercy when you once stand where mercy can meet with you, namely, in the sinner's place. But if you say "I am not guilty," and begin to vindicate or excuse yourself, you are on a ground which the Lord cannot recognize. If you are professedly righteous, how can the Lord deal with you except in justice? And if He deals with you in justice He will readily enough summon His witnesses and prove you guilty and condemn you to Hell. Submit, then, unto God, and say, "Guilty, Lord. I throw down the weapons of my rebellion and acknowledge that I stand condemned before You. And if I am saved at all it must be by Your free forgiveness, by Your unmerited mercy, by Your boundless love."

A man must next submit himself to the plan of salvation by Grace alone. God meets the sinner on the footing of Grace. "I cannot exonerate you," He seems to say, "but I can forgive you. I cannot tolerate your denial of guilt, but if you confess your sin, I am faithful and just to forgive you your sin and to save you from all unrighteousness." Now, are you willing, my dear Hearer—are you sure that you are willing to be saved by Grace, alone, and to owe your deliverance from sin and its punishment entirely to the free favor of God? Will you yield to that? I trust you will.

But there are some who will not, for they go about to establish their own righteousness and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. They think that so much Chapel-going, Church-going, sermon-hearing, Prayer Meeting-attending, Bible reading and so on, will certainly work up something like a claim upon God! O, Sirs, have done with claims! If you come with anything like a claim, the Lord will not touch the case at all, for you have no claim and the pretense of one would be an insult to God! If you fancy you have demands upon God, go into the court of Justice and plead them, but the sentence is certain to be against you, for by the deeds of the Law no flesh can be justified.

Try the other way! Come to God with no claim and appeal to His pity, saying, "Lord, I cry for mercy. Gladly will I accept Your free Grace if You will but give it to me." You will be accepted on that footing, for the Lord is gracious and casts out none who come to Him confessing their sins. You must also submit yourselves to God's way of saving you through an atoning Sacrifice and by means of your personal faith in that Sacrifice. You must receive His Son as Divine and you must believe in that atoning blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins. Surely there should be no difficulty about surrendering the mind to this! Salvation by the great Mediator is such a delightful way of salvation, so just to God, so safe to man, that we ought to clap our hands for very joy to think that such a royal road to Heaven is opened for us!

What do you say, dear Hearers? Does the Holy Spirit incline you to trust in the blood of Jesus? And then there must be a full submission to God in the matter of giving up every sin. Numbers of persons pray for mercy, but they continue in their sins. Such men cannot be saved because salvation is salvation from sin—not in sin. How can we be saved from sin if we are its slaves? If you come to God and cry, "Lord, deliver me and have mercy upon me," and yet you practice private drinking and tipple yourselves into semi-drunkenness, how can you be saved? If you keep on cheating in business, or telling lies, or indulge a malicious or angry temper in the family, or are proud and unkind, selfish and miserly, how can you be saved?

I warn you, Friends, that faith itself cannot save you while these things are so, for if your faith were a saving faith it would rescue you from these evils! This, indeed, is salvation, namely, deliverance from the power and habit of sin! Many prayers are semi-hypocritical—there is a kind of sincerity about them, but there is no whole-hearted desire after holiness

and, therefore, they will never gain a comfortable answer from God. O Seeker, are you willing to give up every sin? Come, drunkard, you pray to be forgiven, but are you willing to leave the intoxicating cup once and for all? You, my Friend, ask to be pardoned—it is well, but are you, at the same time, desirous to cease from your transgressions?

Yes or no? Are you anxious to search out every false way and abandon it as soon as it is discovered? Do you wish to have a holy, truthful, godly tongue? Do you long to be saved from every lust and secret vice? If so, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are already saved! Your sigh to be delivered from evil is the commencement of the work of sanctification! But if you say, "I would be saved from every wrong way except my one indulgence, my one secret iniquity," then you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Your prayers will come back to your bosom

unanswered and your pretended faith in Christ will condemn you! Your fancied faith cannot save you, seeing you love your sin.

A certain man has been accustomed to eat of a certain dish which is bad for his health and when he calls in a physician, their talk is after this fashion—"If you trust me," says the doctor, "I can cure you." "Yes," replies the patient, "I do trust you heartily." The doctor proceeds, "That dainty of yours must be given up, for it is the cause of your disease and so long as you eat it, you must suffer the consequence." "Well, doctor," he says, "I trust you, but I cannot give up my favorite food." Is it not apparent to everybody that he does not trust the physician at all? Even so, when a man declares, "I trust in Christ to save me from sin," and then continues in his wickedness, he mocks the Good Physician and is in danger of sudden destruction! Either you must cast sin out of your heart or it will keep you out of Heaven!

This point must be insisted on—receiving Christ is impossible without, at the same time, renouncing sin! If we would be saved there must be submission to the Lord as to all His teachings. A very necessary point in this age, for a multitude of persons who appear to be religious, judge the Scriptures instead of allowing the Scriptures to judge them. Hear, O you wise men, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Submission to the Infallible authority of the Inspired Word is absolutely required of every disciple of Jesus, but this age delights in the opposite spirit!

Even some of those who call themselves ministers of the Gospel persistently indulge a spirit which is precisely the reverse of the childlike faith which saves the soul. They industriously endeavor to excite rebellion against the teachings of Christ and cry it up under the name of, "honest doubt." They do not wish men to believe, but to think—and their Gospel, practically, is—"Doubt, and do not be baptized, and you shall be saved." Shame on them! Our Gospel is, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved!" And we are content to teach what Jesus Christ, our Lord, told His disciples to preach to all nations!

If I will never yield my reason. If I will never believe what I cannot understand. If I will carry an open knife about with me to cut and hack at texts of Scripture. If I will not sit at

Jesus' feet with Mary, but want Him to sit at my feet that I may tell Him what His religion ought to be and what He ought to have said, how can I be saved? If, after all, we are personally infallible and are to spend all our days in selecting our opinions, how can we know Christ? If instead of yielding my judgment to the plain teachings of my Lord, I revise His doctrines, how can I be saved? If I have not submitted my intellect to God, what peace can there be? Mark this well, you wise young men who know so much more than your fathers and are too intellectual to reverence your fathers' God!

And, now, I must ask another question of you who desire peace and cannot find it. Have you submitted yourselves to the Providential arrangements of God? I know persons who often sit in this House of Prayer who have a quarrel with God. He took away a beloved object and they not only thought Him unkind and cruel at the time, but they still think so! Like a child in a fit of the sulks, they cast an evil eye upon the great Father! They are not at peace and never will be till they have acknowledged the Lord's supremacy and ceased from their rebellious thoughts. If they were in a right state of heart they would thank the Lord for their sharp trials and consent to His will as being assuredly right.

I fear that unsubmission on this point affects a great number of persons. They cannot succeed in business and, therefore, they are out of temper with God. He knows very well that they are not fit to be made rich and could not be trusted with a large business and, therefore, He does not grant their suicidal desires. Some men would never win the race of life if they had an ounce of gold to carry! The only hope for their running at all lies in keeping them unencumbered. We know, also, thoughtful young men who cannot pursue their studies because of failing health. They want to be famous, but they are not strong enough to continue their work for the examination and so they are vexed with the Lord. Or, it may be they have less talent than ambition and they rebel because their Maker has not given them intellects as capacious as that of Solomon. Let them be satisfied to use the talent they have and cease from contending with their Creator!

Many men have a sort of private resentment with Providence and sit down like Jonah under their withered gourd and mutter, "We do well to be angry even unto death." Now, if such is the case with any before me, I would say to them—leave off quarrelling with your God! What can be the use of it? The very best and wisest thing for you is to make friends with Him and let His will be your will. After all, He deals well with you, if you would but see it. Depend upon it, there is something to be made out of the position you occupy—gain will come to you out of all those losses—profit will

arise even from those sad bereavements if you will stand still and see the salvation of God. Acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto you—for unless you do this you may say, "I believe," but you have no

faith in God!

How can a man believe in God when he charges God with treating him wrongly? Faith begets resignation and submission—where there is strife and enmity—unbelief is still supreme. Until you submit yourselves to God it cannot be well with your souls, for He resists the proud but gives Grace to the humble. This is the long and the short of it—you must, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at God's feet and say, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and have mercy upon me in Your own way. I dictate not to You, but I implore Your Grace! I humbly beg forgiveness. Be pleased to pity me. I yield up myself to You, asking You to make me holy. I do from my very heart give up the love of sin. I fear I shall sin, help me to loathe myself when I do so! Make me what You will have me to be and then deal as You will with me. I make no terms nor conditions. Mine is an unconditional surrender. Only for Your mercy's sake renew me. Make me Your child and save me. As You bid me trust Your Son, I trust Him. Lord, I believe! Help you my unbelief."

You will have peace when your heart is brought to this point. At present your wound does not heal because it needs washing, for the grit of pride has fallen into it and is causing a wretched irritation. When pride is gone and you are fully submissive, then shall the wound heal and your broken bones shall rejoice! I am not asking you to submit to a priest! I am not asking you to submit to a mere man! But I speak very earnestly when I say, "Submit yourselves to God"—it is natural, it is right—it is good in itself and filled with the highest good to you.

Submission is essential to salvation, therefore bow before the Lord at once! May the Lord bend that stubborn will and conquer that wayward heart. Yield yourselves to God and pray to be delivered from future rebellion. If you have submitted, do so yet more completely, for so shall you be known to be Christians when you submit yourselves to God. If you will not submit, your faith is a lie, your hope is a delusion, your prayer is an insult, your peace is presumption and your end will be despair! Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. "But God shall wound the head of His enemies and the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses."

II. But now, secondly, having thus spoken upon the great duty of submission, let us consider the other and FOLLOWING PRECEPTS. I think I am not suspicious without reason when I express a fear that the preaching which has lately been very common and, in some respects very useful, of, "only believe and you shall be saved," has sometimes been altogether mistaken by those who have heard it. Cases occur in which young persons go on living light, frivolous, giddy, and even wicked lives—and yet they claim that they believe in Jesus Christ. When you come to examine them a little, you find that their belief in Christ means that they believe that He has saved them, although everybody who knows their character can clearly see that they are not saved at all!

Now, what is their faith but the belief of a lie? They are living just as they did live and, therefore, it is clear that they are not saved from their former foolish conversation, nor from

their bad tempers, nor from their old sins. And yet they try to persuade themselves that they are saved! Now, true faith never believes lies! Presumption lives upon lies, but faith will only feed on the Truth of God! My faith does not teach me to believe I am saved when straight before my very eyes I have the evidence that I am not saved, since I am living in the very sin I pretend to be saved from! Though we would not, for a moment, cast a doubt upon the doctrine of Justification by Faith and Free Salvation, we must also preach more and more that parallel Truth of God—"You must be born again."

We must bring to the front the grand old word which has been thrown into the background by some evangelists, namely, "Repent." Repentance is as essential to salvation as faith. Indeed, there is no faith without repentance except the faith which needs to be repented of. A dry-eyed faith will never see the kingdom of God! A holy loathing for sin always attends upon a childlike faith in the Sin-Bearer. Where the root Grace of faith is found, other Graces will grow from it. Now notice how the Spirit of God, after having bidden us submit, goes on to show what else is to be done. He calls for a brave resistance of the devil. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The business of salvation is not all passive—the soul must be awakened to active warfare! I am to fall into the arms of Christ, that He may save me—I must trust Him completely. And when I depend upon Him I receive life—and the very first effort of that life is to strike with all its might the adversary of Christ and of my own soul. I am not only to contend with sin, but with the spirit which foments and suggests sin! I am to resist the secret spirit of evil as well as its outward acts.

"But oh," says one, "I cannot give up an inveterate habit." Sir, you must give it up! You must resist the devil or perish. "But I have been so long in it," cries the man. Yes, but if you truly trust Christ, your first effort will be to fight against the evil habit. And if it is not merely a habit, nor an impulse, but if your danger lies in the existence of a cunning spirit who is armed at all points and both strong and subtle, yet you must not yield, but resolve to resist to the death, cheered by the gracious promise that he will flee from you! You shall, in the name of Jesus overcome temptation, master evil habits and escape from bondage! Only strike for freedom and disdain the chain of sin. If you are to have peace with God there must be war with Satan! You cannot rest in your spirit and know the peace which faith gives unless you wage war to the knife against every evil and against the patron and Prince of Evil, even Satan. Are you ready for this? You cannot have peace unless you are!

Next the Apostle writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." He who sincerely believes in Christ will be much in prayer. Yet there are some who say, "We want to be saved," but they neglect prayer! They cannot make out how it is that they have no enjoyment of religion. But why need they be puzzled? Ask your neglected closet! Ask your own heart how you can be happy and prosperous and blessed in Divine things if you do not pray! Remember that the mere saying of prayers is not praying. The essence of prayer lies

in the heart drawing near to God—and it can do that without words. Prayer is the feeling that God is present and the desire of the soul to come near to Him so as to know His influence, to know His love, to feel His power and to be conformed to His will.

This kind of praying can be continued by the power of God's Holy Spirit all day long. We must know something of this. "Behold he prays" is one of the first marks of a saved soul and if you think that by some momentary act of faith which you suppose you exercised you are therefore saved—while your heart remains at a distance from God, prayerless and careless—you are fatally deceived! Such is not the teaching of Scripture and there is no guarantee for it in the promises of God. If prayer is utterly neglected, the soul is dead!

The next precept is, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners." What? Does the Word of God tell sinners to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts? Yes, it does. Some Brother whispers, "Ah, that is Arminianism." Who are you that reply against God's Word? If such teaching is in this Inspired Book, how dare we question it? It comes with a, "thus says the Lord"—"Cleanse your hands, you sinners." When a man comes to God and says, "I am willing and anxious to be saved and I trust Christ to save me," and yet he keeps his dirty black hands exercised in filthy actions doing what he knows is wrong, does he expect God to hear him? Do I need spend even so many as a half-dozen words to show that this man does not believe and is not really honest before the Most High? "Cleanse your hands, you sinners."

Can you ask God to be at peace with you while your hands grasp your sins with loving embrace and are full of bribes, or are foul with lusts, or are smiting with the fist of anger and wrath? If you do the devil's work with your hands, do not expect the Lord to fill them with His blessings! It cannot be! You must break off your sins by righteousness and, as Paul shook off the viper from His hand into the fire, so must you. By the power of faith, if it is a real faith, you will be able to purge your outward life. Why, when men talk about being spiritual and are not even decently moral, it makes us sick to hear them! How dare they talk about being Christians when they do not live as well as Muslims or heathens? Oh you dogs, howling out your shame, what portion have you among the children so long as you bite and devour and love your filthiness? It is idle to talk about salvation while sin is hugged to the heart with both hands. Away with such hypocrisy!

Then it is added, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." Can they do this? Assuredly not by themselves, but still, in order to have peace with God there must be so much purification of the heart that it shall no longer be double-minded. He who would have salvation must seek it with all his heart—must so seek it that he is resolved to give up anything and to endure anything so that he may but be rescued from sin. "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." Get rid of that leering eye of yours towards uncleanness and that cross eye which squints towards worldly gain—for till your whole heart cries after the Most High, He will not hear you!

When you can say with David, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God," you shall find the Lord! When you cease trying to serve two masters and submit yourselves unto God, He will bless you, but not till then! I believe that this touches the center of the mischief in many of those hearts which fail to reach peace—they have not given up sin— they are not whole-hearted after salvation. Then the Lord bids us "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness."

I grieve to say that I have met with persons who say, "I cannot find peace, I cannot get salvation," and talk very prettily in that way. But yet, outside the door they are giggling one with another, as if it were matter of amusement. The Sabbath is spent in vain, idle, frivolous conversation—seriousness they do not seem even to have felt. The whole matter appears to be a mere sport. Some converts seem to jump into religion as people do into a bath—they jump out, again, about as fast. They never weigh the matter. They have no thought, no sorrow for sin, no humiliation before God. Stop that laughter if you are an unsaved soul—for decency's sake, stop that laughter!

For you to laugh while in danger of being lost sounds to me as ghastly and as grim as if the fiends of Hell were to set up a theater and perform a comedy in the Pit. What right have you with laughter while sin is unforgiven, while God is angry with you? No, go to Him in fitter form and fashion or He will refuse your prayers. Be serious! Begin to think of death, judgment, the wrath to come. These are not trifles, Friends, nor things to make sport about. Neither is true religion a thing that is to be attended to as easily as when one snaps his finger and says, "Heigh presto! Quick. It's done!" By no means! If you are saved, your mind is solemnly impressed by eternal realities and you are serious about matters of life and death. The very thought of sin pains you—and since you meet with it in your daily life, you have cause for daily humbling and are afflicted because of it. Many, I fear, fail to get peace because it is not a solemn matter at all for them. They trifle with it as if it were a game for boys and girls to play and not for the heart and spirit to enter upon with deep concern.

Then the Lord sums up His precepts by saying, "Humble yourselves in the sight of God." With that I close. There must be a deep and lowly prostration of the spirit before God. If you happen to have a boy who shows a high rebellious spirit against you and you have chastened him for it, but yet he continues in his rebellion, you tell him that there must be a humbling of himself before you can forgive him. If he is a wise child and wishes to escape your anger, he makes a dutiful confession, acknowledges that he was wrong and appeals to your love—and you freely pardon him. But in many who pretend to come to God there is no humbling. They do not admit that they ever did anything particularly wrong and they do not care if they did! Still, they hear there is such a thing as believing in Jesus and they profess to believe, not because there is any need for it, as they think, but for fashion's sake.

Ah, Friends, Jesus Christ did not come to heal the whole, but the sick! Neither did He die to bind up those who are not broken, nor to make alive those who were never killed.

There must be in you—and may God give it to you—a brokenness of spirit! A broken and a contrite heart He will not despise! If your heart has never been broken, how can He bind it up? If it were never wounded, how can He heal it? These are weighty matters and I speak them weightily lest anyone among you should be deceived. God help you to cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

This is the way of salvation—that you believe in Jesus Christ whom God has sent! But remember that He saves us FROM our sins, not IN our sins! Faith in Jesus Christ saves and will save all who have it—but it is by purging out sin. It assures us that we are pardoned and thus it makes us love the Christ by whom we are forgiven. This love leads us to abhor ourselves for our sins and we endeavor to purify ourselves from them by His Spirit. Faith without works is dead, being alone, and though a man is justified by faith and not by works—and by faith alone—not even in part by his works!

Yet the faith which saves is a faith which produces good works and leads into the way of holiness. He who does not seek after righteousness and true holiness, let him pretend what he may, he is dead while he lives! The Lord have mercy upon you, for Christ's sake. Amen.